



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
*VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York*  
P.O. Box 8980, Albany, NY 12208-8980

April, 2006

## ***VA News at Your Fingertips***

**William F. Feeley**, Network Director for VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York (Network 2) since March 2003 has been appointed Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management for the Department of Veterans Affairs effective February 18, 2006.

**Michael S. Finegan** has been appointed Acting Network Director for Network 2. Mr. Finegan is the Director for VA Western New York Healthcare System (Buffalo/Batavia).

**Timothy Liezert**, Associate Medical Center Director for VA Western New York Healthcare System has been appointed Acting Medical Center Director, VA Western NY Healthcare System.

**CARES Update** – VA's decision regarding the Canandaigua VA CARES options is still pending. When that decision is made and released by the Secretary the next Local Advisory Panel (LAP) meeting will be scheduled.

### **OIF/OEF**

Network 2 continues to outreach and care for veterans returning from the conflicts in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom) and Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom). To date 9,000 veterans from upstate New York have returned from those conflicts and half of those veterans or 50% have enrolled in VA health care in Network 2. It continues to be a high priority for VA to outreach to our newest veterans because these returning soldiers have two years from their date of discharge to receive care free of a co-pay obligation for an illness or injury related to their service to their country. We continue to partner with other health and human service agencies and New York State and County agencies to help us get information out to returning veterans about their VA health care benefits.

Medical Center	Total # of Returning OEF/OIF Veterans	# of OEF/OIF Veterans Being Seen by VA
Buffalo	2,058	1,181
Canandaigua	1,020	587
Bath	519	277
Syracuse	3,323	1,457
Albany	2,177	1,015
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,097</b>	<b>4,517</b>

### **Update on Advanced Clinic Access (ACA)**

As of January 2006, in over 75% of Network 2's Primary Care clinics, patients are being seen either on the same day, next day or two days out. New patients are experiencing a 2-15 day wait for their Primary Care appointments at Network 2 Primary Care clinics about 45% of the time.

## **Quarterly Report - Network 2 Performance Results (Out of 21 Networks)**

### **Easy Access to Care**

- Total Growth of Unique Patients – ranked 14<sup>th</sup> nationally
- Total Veteran Market Penetration - ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> nationally
- Category A Veteran Market Penetration – ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> nationally
- Timeliness, Accuracy & Coordination – meets national VA target

### **Best Health Care Value**

- Cost per patient – ranked 10<sup>th</sup> nationally
- Pharmacy cost – ranked 11<sup>th</sup> & slightly higher than the national average

### **Outstanding Satisfaction**

- Inpatient - 9<sup>th</sup> nationally
- Outpatient – 1<sup>st</sup> nationally

### **Excellence in Quality**

- Cancer, Cardiovascular, Infectious disease and Tobacco – ranked 11<sup>th</sup> nationally in quality scores.

**My HealthVet Program** [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov) - Over 4,900 veterans in Network 2 have registered in the Program to access health information and resources. More than 9,225 prescription refills for Network 2 patients have been processed online - a service that became available in September 2005.

**Albany VA** – The new \$2.3 million renovation and expanded Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory opened in February. This is part of a national project to improve cardiac services for veterans by providing VA medical centers state of the art high resolution digital imaging equipment to diagnose and treat a variety of cardiac conditions. The Web based program gives real time digital images of the heart for review, not “snap shot” images.

Michelle Biscossi, RN, MS Surgical Nurse Practitioner and a resident of Saratoga, NY and Walter Rivera, MD of Loudonville, NY who is currently serving in Iraq and a State Surgeon for the New York Army National Guard, received a \$10,000 award from the Department of Veterans Affairs. They were recognized for reducing the incidence of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) in hospitalized patients by demonstrating the reduction of DVT by 21% from 2000-2002.

Peter Potter, former Director of Public Affairs for Senator Frank Padavan, Vice President New York State Senate, has been selected as the Public Affairs Officer for the Albany/Stratton VA.

**Bath VA** – Craig Howard, Director of the Canandaigua VA has been asked to also serve as the Acting Director for the Bath VA.

### **VA Western New York (Buffalo/Batavia)**

**Buffalo VA** – The Helen G. Jacob Women's Wellness Center celebrated its 10 year anniversary. Keynote speaker was Betty Moseley Brown, Associate Director, Center for Women Veterans from VA Central Office.

VA Western New York is partnering with Goodwill Industries and Veterans LifeOps to host a Stand Down for veterans on Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at VFW Post #898 at 2909 South Park, Lackawanna from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Phase 1 of the Buffalo VA's Emergency Room Renovation Project is completed. Private patient rooms and a centralized nursing station improve the delivery and quality of patient care.

**Batavia VA** – A ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for the grand opening of the Women's Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Residential Program on June 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. at the gazebo.

There will be an unveiling of the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder memorial Walkway on June 17<sup>th</sup> at noon.

**Canandaigua VA** – Secretary R. James Nicholson named Canandaigua VA one of three Mental Health Centers of Excellence which will focus on advancing research and enhancing care for mental health issues that affect some veterans. The other two VA's named were Waco, Texas and San Diego, California.

**Syracuse VA** – has been designated as a Level 2 Polytrauma Center for Network 2. As a Level 2 Polytrauma Center the Syracuse VA will be accepting combat veterans, active duty military and reserve combat soldiers, already stabilized, but requiring further sub-acute care for their multiple injuries. Soldiers and veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) are sustaining multiple severe injuries as a result of explosions and blasts resulting in

polytraumatic injuries and disability. These veterans require specialized intensive rehabilitation and coordination of care throughout their course of recovery and rehabilitation.

Your feedback is important:

Let us know what information you would like to have about VA at your fingertips by sending your comments to [Kathleen.hider@va.gov](mailto:Kathleen.hider@va.gov)

Please contact my office at 518–626-7317 if you have any questions you need answered or issue you would like to bring to my attention.

Sincerely,

**Michael S. Finegan**

Acting Network Director

VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York